

TAYLOROLOGY

A Continuing Exploration and Review of the William Desmond Taylor Murder Case

Murder Shocks Film Colony

PINK SILK "NIGHTIE"
FROM TAYLOR HOME
TRACED TO ACTRESS

DRUG CRAZED
FILM QUEEN
IS MURDER
SUSPECT

*Peril to Nation Seen
In Hollywood Scandal*

THROBBING CODE
LOVE LETTER
FOUND

FILM DIRECTOR'S
SLAYING LEADS
TO ORGY PROBE

LONGTHOUGHTS

Welcome to Taylorology. We plan to be around for a long time.

Our interest in the February 1, 1922 murder of William Desmond Taylor began a decade ago. Since that time curiosity became fascination, interest became hobby. We have collected clippings on the case from over 200 newspapers. To us, the Taylor case is a highly enjoyable endless maze, with countless colorful nooks and crannies. We want to share our discoveries with others who have a current or budding interest in the case.

We do not consider ourselves to be "experts" on the Taylor case; we rather doubt there is any such animal. "Enthusiastically dedicated amateurs" is more suitable a label.

We have no secret inside information on the case; everything we know we have learned or deduced from published material. But so much misinformation has been written about the case and accepted as fact, that we feel certain this publication can help correct some of the errors and clear away some of the mythical fog.

"The Taylor case" encompasses far more than just the facts of the case. It also includes the whispered rumors, the press coverage, the public reaction and the effect on individuals and Hollywood.

In short, the purpose of Taylorology is:

- To serve as a forum for discussion of the case;

- To share information and correct misinformation about the case;

- To act as a focal point for people interested in the case (a sort of club);

- To review and discuss books and other publications which refer to the case;

- To increase knowledge about the case;

- To reprint rare old newspaper material on the case.

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Improvement in the size and technical quality of this publication will depend upon our circulation. We thought it best to start modestly and concentrate on finding our readership. Our content is far more important than our packaging.

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If this is your first exposure to the William Desmond Taylor case, please read Chapters 20-22 of King of Comedy and all of Mabel. (See "Bookshelf.") Your public library should have both volumes, or be able to obtain them via interlibrary loan. But anyone caught up in the Taylor case mystery will want to own copies for handy future reference.

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The feature article in this issue pertains to the inquest; this is by far the most detailed account of the inquest ever published.

Newspaper coverage of all aspects of the Taylor case must be sifted carefully to separate the facts from the "journalistic enhancement." A very clear example of this can be seen when one looks at the official inquest transcript, published here, and compares it to the newspaper reports of same. Mary Miles Minter did not testify at the inquest; she was not even present--she had gone into seclusion and did not appear in public for the remainder of that month. But her absence did not stop one Eastern newspaper from printing a purported photograph of her on the witness stand at the inquest! There was also some inaccuracy in the reporting of the inquest testimony. As this took place on material clearly in the public record, one can only imagine the discrepancies existing between what was actually said and what was reported in other, more private statements and interviews. Everyone was really at the mercy of the press, the only news medium at the time. This is why the inquest transcript is so important; it is one of the rare places where we can see what was actually said.

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Our next issue will have a feature article on one of the most bizarre episodes of the Taylor case--the Connette episode. Plus more "yellow journalism" by Wallace Smith (including the "love cult"), celebrity comments by Will Rogers and an answer to the question, "Is Edward Sands the brother of Taylor?"

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In order for Taylorology to fulfill its purpose we need your participation. Please send your letters, comments, questions and information to Taylorology, P.O. Box 4603, Mesa, AZ 85201. Thanks.

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INTRODUCTION TO TAYLOROLOGY

The following departments are planned for each issue unless crowded out by extra-lengthy feature articles:

"Headline Sampler"

The front cover will contain reproductions of actual Taylor case newspaper headlines. These headlines do not necessarily refer to the specific contents of the current issue, but it is planned that everything in the headlines will eventually be covered.

"Longthoughts"

The editor speaks his mind.

"Feature Article"

The highlight of each issue is a feature article pertaining to some aspect of the Taylor case.

"Mythbusters"

Many errors about the case have been repeated so often they are accepted as fact. This department attempts to separate the myths from the facts wherever possible.

"Forum"

This is the place for dialogue, comments, questions and reader's information.

"Bookshelf"

This is intended as a guide for further research into the Taylor case, placing a spotlight on past and present publications of interest.

"Flashback"

A great deal of each issue will be comprised of "Flashback" departments reprinting old newspaper material on the case, virtually none of which has ever been reprinted.

Public outcry against Hollywood was never greater than in the month following the Taylor murder. That outcry had begun in earnest with the Arbuckle case several months earlier.² But the Arbuckle case, still unresolved at the time of Taylor's death, was only the first stage. The Taylor case and the revelations surrounding it fanned public anti-Hollywood sentiment to levels that have never been equalled. A month after the murder, Will Hays assumed control of the movie industry and was able to placate much of the anti-Hollywood sentiment. As time passed public morality changed and people became less and less bothered by Hollywood scandals. Some of the "Flashback" segments, written in the month or so following Taylor's murder, may not refer directly to the murder but only to Hollywood morality in general. Nevertheless, the Taylor

murder is the undercurrent beneath all the material.

"Wallace Smith"

The two sensationalizing reporters whose dispatches did the most to spark anti-Hollywood sentiment were Edward Doherty and Wallace Smith. They told not only much of the rumored "dirt" behind the Taylor case, but also they reported other Hollywood scandals which had never been made public. Wallace Smith's dispatches, from the Chicago American, were by far the most eye-popping. They are reprinted here, starting with the February 6, 1922 dispatches in order to present a prime historical example of "yellow-journalism" reporting of the case.

"Commentary"

This department will reprint contemplations on the case by editors, columnists and the public (from old "Letters to the Editor" sections).

"Celebrities"

Many celebrities stepped forward to comment on the case, mostly to eulogize Taylor or to defend Hollywood.

"Humor"

The Taylor case was not without its humorous aspects, and many humorists found a lot of "material" in the case.

"Taylor's Words"

This is an opportunity for the victim to say a few words. Perhaps he should be remembered more for his own words than for the words spoken about him by others.

"Bon Mots"

The Taylor case inspired many short quips. These will also be used as filler material.

"Cartoon"

Each issue will reprint an old editorial cartoon inspired by the Taylor case.

The material in the "Flashback" sections will eventually reprint a great deal of material, some of which reflects very adversely on the character of Taylor and his contemporaries. It is often easiest to believe the worst about someone, but this material is not presented with that purpose in mind. Rather, it is presented as an interesting piece of the Taylor case phenomenon, a piece which cannot be ignored without also ignoring the historical reality of the public reaction to the case. But keep in mind that this material is not presented because it is "factual" but because it is interesting.

Feature Article: THE INQUEST

On February 4, 1922, a Los Angeles County Coroner's Inquest was held to determine the cause of William Desmond Taylor's death. Testimony which follows is taken from the official transcript of that inquest. Narrative material has been gathered from the many newspaper accounts of the event.⁷³

The inquest was held at the undertaking establishment of Ivy H. Overholtzer at Tenth and Hill Streets in Los Angeles. The building was a former mansion. The inquest was scheduled to start at 10 o'clock, but long before then curious knots of spectators had gathered to catch a glimpse, if possible, of the famous film stars who were summoned to appear.

As the minutes passed the crowd increased in numbers, and finally the witnesses found themselves passing through an aisle made by the surging mob of curiosity-seekers, which led up the stairs of the one-time mansion to the porch, and from there into the interior. In the gathering was a liberal sprinkling of women, but chiefly the watchers were men.

In the midst suddenly appeared Henry Peavey, negro cook and valet to the dead man. At once he became the center of interest. He seemed to enjoy having his picture taken for the newspapers and brushed a fleck of dust from his highly polished shoes. He was arrayed in a black and white checkered suit with a knife-edge crease in the trousers, a yellow silk shirt and a bow-tie. Now and then he broke into a wide grin. He chatted freely about his dead employer, but there was a fear in his eyes. He laughed, too, but it was rather forced laughter that came from habit rather than from what was said at the moment.

As noted film stars drew up in their automobiles in front of the building the crowd pressed eagerly forward to catch a glimpse of them. Uniformed policemen were stationed at a discreet distance to see that order was preserved and were instructed to clear the sidewalks at the first sign of any unseemly demonstration.

Mr. and Mrs. Douglas MacLean, who had heard the shot, were among the first to arrive. They both shielded their faces from the camera battery, and took front seats in the inquest room.

In an undertaking room adjoining the inquest room, Mr. Taylor's body lay on a marble slab, his body covered with

a satin pall except for the head. Henry Peavey was led by detectives into this room. He glanced at the body and knelt on the floor by the bier, sobbing loudly. There were no women's tears at the inquest, only the tears of Henry Peavey. He cried for more than a minute, then he walked around the corpse several times. "He looks just like he did many times when I would go to wake him up in the morning to give him his medicine--just so natural," he said, tears streaming down his face. A few minutes later Peavey took his seat in the inquest room, having mastered his emotions.

Charles Eyton was also taken to view the body.

All of the seven detective sergeants who were working on the case were on hand in the hope that they might be able to uncover some new clew that might lead them to the slayer.

Shortly before the inquest started two huge bunches of red roses arrived at the undertaking establishment. They were the first flowers to be sent. One of the floral pieces was from Mary Miles Minter, the other from Mabel Normand. Miss Minter was not present at the inquest. The two floral tributes were placed in the room where Mr. Taylor lay.

By the time Coroner Frank Nance was ready to take testimony the inquest room was filled to overflowing and spectators filled every available inch, crammed themselves into doorways and wedged themselves into the spacious hallways and on stair steps, craning their necks eagerly forward to see as much of the scene as possible.

Six chairs, in a semi-circle in front of the room, were set aside for the jury.

After being sworn in, the six men viewed Mr. Taylor's body in the adjoining room.

At 10 o'clock, the hour set by Coroner Nance for the start of the inquest, Mabel Normand was missing. The coroner ordered a telephone search for her and she arrived about fifteen minutes later. While newspaper photographers were watching the front of the building, Mabel was hurried in through the back alley, under a fence and through the back yard of the undertaking establishment. As she entered the inquest room there was a lot of scurrying. A group of press agents and film officials formed a

flyng wedge and escorted Mabel safely to a private office, where she rested until the time for her appearance on the witness stand.

The inquest began.

First to testify was Charles Eyton.

Nance: "Please state your name?"

Eyton: "Charles Eyton."

Nance: "Where do you reside?"

Eyton: "1920 Vine Street, Hollywood."

Nance: "What is your occupation?"

Eyton: "General Manager, Famous Players-Lasky Corporation."

Nance: "Mr. Eyton, have you seen the remains of the deceased in the adjoining room?"

Eyton: "Yes sir."

Nance: "Do you recognize them as one you knew in life?"

Eyton: "Yes sir."

Nance: "Who was it?"

Eyton: "Mr. Desmond Taylor."

Nance: "Where was he born?"

Eyton: "He was born in Ireland, to the best of my knowledge. He told me so."

Nance: "What was his age?"

Eyton: "Forty-five, I should judge."

Nance: "Was he married, single or a widower?"

Eyton: "He was married."

Nance: "When did he die?"

Eyton: "Thursday morning, or Wednesday night; I saw the body first on Thursday morning."

Nance: "Last Thursday?"

Eyton: "Yes sir."

Nance: "Do you recall that date?"

Eyton: "It was the 2nd."

Nance: "February 2nd?"

Eyton: "February 2nd."

Nance: "Where did he die?"

Eyton: "At the Apartment 'B', South Alvarado Street, 404 I think it was."

Nance: "What was the cause of his death, if you know?"

Eyton: "Well, Mr. Taylor's assistant rang me up at my residence, about, I should judge, 8 o'clock, and told me Mr. Taylor had died suddenly; so I immediately went over to his residence, and he was lying on the floor on his back. Detective Ziegler was there, and he had called the Doctor, he told me previous to my arrival; and the Doctor told me Mr. Taylor had died from hemorrhage of the stomach. Mr. MacLean, Douglas MacLean--

had told me that he had thought he had heard a shot the night before, and his wife also thought she had heard a shot--and he wanted the body turned over; they didn't want to turn it over until the Coroner came. The Deputy Coroner came after awhile, and he was told he had died of hemorrhage of the stomach and I told him he had better turn the body over to make sure, and he put his hand under Mr. Taylor's body, and found a little--when he pulled his hand out, it had a little blood on his hand. Douglas asked him what that was, and he said it evidently had run down from his mouth, but I noticed that there was no trail of blood--Mr. Taylor's head was in a pool of blood--there was no trail of blood running down."

Nance: "There was a pool of blood under his head?"

Eyton: "Under his head, yes, a little pool of blood. I immediately opened up Mr. Taylor's vest, and looked, and looked on the right-hand side, and there was no mark. I looked on the left-hand side and saw some blood, and then I told the Deputy Coroner that I thought that evidence enough to turn his body over to see what would happen. I sent for a pillow to put under Mr. Taylor's head, and we turned him over--the Deputy Coroner and myself--and we pulled his shirt and his vest up, and we found the bullet wound."

Nance: "Mr. Eyton, was his body stone cold at that time?"

Eyton: "Stone cold and very stiff and rigid."

Nance: "Indicating that it had been dead for some time?"

Eyton: "Yes."

Nance: "Where was the body lying with reference to the front entrance to his home?"

Eyton: "It was lying right in front of a little desk with the head pointed east and the feet pointed west. I should judge the feet were three or four feet from the door--the front entrance."

Nance: "Who were present when you was there?"

Eyton: "When I came in, the first man I noticed was Detective Ziegler, whom I have known for a number of years, and Douglas MacLean; Charles Maigne; the landlord; and Harry Fellows, Mr. Taylor's assistant director."

Nance: "Did all of these persons live there in this neighborhood?"

Eyton: "That I could not tell you."

Mr. MacLean did, I know because he showed me where his Apartment was."

Nance: "The place where Mr. Taylor lived, was in a court?"

Eyton: "In a court, yes."

Nance: "These other buildings were near-by?"

Eyton: "There are several apartments in this court, all the way around."

Nance: "Did Mr. and Mrs. MacLean, or either of them, tell you about the hour that they heard the gunshot?"

Eyton: "Yes, Mr. MacLean told me that it was about 8 or a quarter after 8, and Mrs. MacLean thought it was a little later."

Nance: "That night."

Eyton: "Yes, the night before."

Nance: "You didn't make any definite measurements as to the position of the body?"

Eyton: "No sir."

Nance: "So that what you testified to is only an estimate, and nothing definite about it?"

Eyton: "Yes."

Nance: "Now, how long has Mr. Taylor lived in this place?"

Eyton: "That I could not tell you; he lived in it before he went to the war, I believe."

Nance: "When did you last see him alive?"

Eyton: "The same day--Wednesday."

Nance: "Now, did he have any fire-arms of his own?"

Eyton: "I believe he had, a revolver; I believe the revolver was in the upper drawer upstairs; in fact, I know there was, because Detective Ziegler and myself went up there and saw it."

Nance: "When you were called to this place, did you see any fire-arms in this room where he was?"

Eyton: "No."

Nance: "What is the name of his valet, or attendant there?"

Eyton: "Harry ^{/sic/} Peavey, the Colored Cook; I never knew him or saw him."

Nance: "Was he the one who called you?"

Eyton: "Harry Fellows, his assistant director, was the one who called me."

Nance: "You have no independent knowledge of the manner in which he met his death?"

Eyton: "No sir."

Nance: "Have you any questions,

Gentlemen?"

A Juror: "Was his clothing ruffled in any way, showing any violence?"

Eyton: "No, absolutely none; it looked like he just walked in the door and was shot in the back; that is the way it looked. It didn't show evidence in the room when I got there--neither the room or the body showed any evidence of a struggle. He had on the same suit as when I seen him the day before when he talked to me."

Nance: "Is there any other questions? That is all, you may be excused."

Then Dr. Wagner was called. Gray haired, distinguished looking, slowly and calmly he read his report detailing the results of the autopsy.

Nance: "Please state your name?"

Wagner: "Dr. A. F. Wagner."

Nance: "Where do you reside?"

Wagner: "Los Angeles."

Nance: "What is your occupation?"

Wagner: "Physician and County Autopsy Surgeon."

Nance: "Dr. Wagner, did you perform a post-mortem on the body of the deceased?"

Wagner: "I did."

Nance: "Will you state your findings?"

Wagner: "I performed an autopsy on William D. Taylor, at the morgue of Ivy H. Overholtzer, February 2, 1922, and found a bullet wound in the left side. The bullet entered six and a half inches below the arm-pit, and in the posterior axillary line, and passed inward and upward, passing through the seventh interspace of the ribs, penetrating both lobes of the left lung, and emerging on the inner margin of the upper lobe, then traversing the Mediastinum, passed out of the chest on the right side of the middle line, posterior to the right collar bone, and entered the tissues of the neck, and I found the bullet just beneath the skin, four and a half inches to the left of the outer side of the right shoulder, and on a line drawn from the top of the shoulder to the lower junction of the right ear. The left pleural cavity contained considerable clotted blood. The vital, chest, and abdominal organs were free from disease. The cause of death was gunshot wound of the chest."

Nance: "Have you any questions, Gentlemen? That is all, you may be

excused."

"Mabel Normand," called out Coroner Nance.

A bulky police officer forced a passage through the throng, and close behind him came the star. Immediately following her was a girl friend. Miss Normand stepped briskly to the witness chair. It was easily to be seen that she had steeled herself for the ordeal of questioning. She had an air of forced composure and showed little of the vivacity that is identified with her screen personality.

Miss Normand wore a coat which almost enveloped her small body, a brown sport coat with white line checks. It had a huge opossum collar and cuffs. She wore a black gown with a cream lace waist and collar showing through a bolero effect. On her head was a mannish, wide brimmed green velour fedora. Her hands were in white gloves and she held a lavender silk handkerchief in one of them, which she occasionally fluttered as she testified.

Her voice was low, clear, rich and calm, displaying no nervousness, with a resonance that carried it to the far corners of the old-fashioned room.

Nance: "Please state your name?"

Normand: "Mabel Normand."

Nance: "Where do you reside?"

Normand: "3089 West Seventh."

Nance: "What is your occupation?"

For a moment Miss Normand seemed taken completely by surprise. What should she say? Call herself an actress, or film actress? The solution came like a flash.

Normand: "Motion pictures."

She was relieved. Apparently nobody had noticed her short silence.

Nance: "Miss Normand, were you acquainted with Mr. Taylor, the deceased in this case?"

Normand: "Yes."

Nance: "Did you see him on the evening before his death occurred?"

Normand: "Yes, I did."

Nance: "And where did you see him?"

Normand: "Will I tell you when I went in there and when I came out?"

Nance: "Did you see him at his home?"

Normand: "Oh, yes."

Nance: "And you were with him about how long on that occasion?"

Normand: "I got there about 7 o'clock, and left at a quarter to 8."

Nance: "And when you left his place, did you leave him in the house,

or outside?"

Normand: "No, he came down to my car with me."

Nance: "Where was your car?"

Normand: "Right in front of the court."

Nance: "On Alvarado Street?"

Normand: "Yes, on the hill."

Nance: "He accompanied you to your car?"

Normand: "Yes."

Nance: "Was he still there when you drove away?"

Normand: "Yes, as my car turned around, I waved my hand at him; he was partly up a little stairs there."

The witness illustrated the wave with one of her characteristic gestures, flashing a gloved hand toward the faces of the bewhiskered jurors.

Nance: "At the time you was in the house, was anybody also in the house?"

Normand: "Yes, Henry, his man."

Nance: "Henry Peavey?"

Normand: "Yes."

Nance: "Do you know whether Mr. Peavey left the house before you did or not?"

Normand: "Yes, he did; he left about, I should say about 15 or 20 minutes before I left, but stopped outside and spoke to my Chauffeur; we came out later."

Nance: "No one else except Henry Peavey was there?"

Normand: "That was all."

There was a little silence.

Nance: "What time was it you say you left him--drove away from his place?"

Normand: "I left him on the sidewalk about a quarter to eight."

Nance: "Did you expect to see him or hear from him later that evening?"

Normand: "Yes, he said--he had finished his dinner--he said would I go out and take dinner with him and I said, 'no; I was tired; I had to go home and get up very early; he said he would call me up in about an hour.'

Nance: "Did he call you?"

Normand: "No, I went to bed; if he called me I was asleep; when I am asleep he tells my Maid not to disturb me."

Nance: "Was that the last time you saw him when you left him about a quarter to eight?"

Normand: "That was the last time."

There was just the slightest suggestion of a break in the voice of the comedienne as she uttered the last word.

Nance: "Have you any questions, Gentlemen? That is all, you may be excused."

Mabel Normand smiled, bowed to the jurors and heaved a sigh of relief.

Henry Peavey was the next witness.

Nance: "Please state your name."

Peavey: "Henry Peavey."

Nance: "Where do you live?"

Peavey: "I live at 127½ East 3rd Street."

Nance: "What is your occupation?"

Peavey: "Cook and valet."

Nance: "Mr. Peavey, were you employed by Mr. Taylor, the deceased in this case?"

Peavey: "Sir?"

Nance: "Were you employed by the dead man in the case?"

Peavey: "Yes sir."

Nance: "How long have you been working for him?"

Peavey: "About six months."

Nance: "Were you in his house on the evening when he was found dead there?"

Peavey: "Yes sir."

Nance: "What time did you leave the house?"

Peavey: "I figured it was about a quarter past when I left the house."

Nance: "Where was he when you left?"

Peavey: "He was sitting in a chair facing just t-----m /transcript illegible/ now, and Miss Normand was sitting in a chair just the same. They were discussing a red-backed book."

Peavey gestured daintily as he told of Miss Normand's visit.

Nance: "In what part of the house were they?"

Peavey: "They were near the dining room where you enter the dining room from the living room."

Nance: "That is a two-story apartment, is it not?"

Peavey: "Yes sir."

Nance: "And on the ground floor, how many rooms?"

Peavey: "The living room, dining room, and kitchen."

Nance: "Now, the entrance to this apartment is immediately into the front there, is it not--the front room, rather?"

Peavey: "The front room, yes sir."

Nance: "They were seated?"

Peavey: "Near the dining room there, in the living room, near the entrance to the dining room."

Nance: "When you went out, which way did you go out, at the front or at the back?"

Peavey: "I went out the front way. I always lock up the back door when I go out. I always lock the back door screen; it has a hook on the inside. I use the front door to come out all the time."

Nance: "Did you carry the back door key with you?"

Peavey: "No sir; I always turn it in the door and leave it just as it is."

Nance: "Now, when did you next see Mr. Taylor?"

Peavey: "The next morning, when I went to work."

Nance: "What time are you in the habit of coming to work?"

Peavey: "I am usually there about half past seven."

Nance: "What time did you arrive there the next morning?"

Peavey: "At just half past seven."

Nance: "What day was that?"

Peavey: "Thursday morning."

Nance: "On arriving there, what did you do?"

Peavey: "I picked up the paper first; I stopped in a drug store on the corner of 5th and Los Angeles to get a bottle of medicine; Milk of Magnesia, he usually takes that every morning, I bought that on my way out. I picked up the paper and unlocked the door."

Peavey hesitated a moment and his eyes began blinking rapidly.

"The first thing I saw was his feet. I looked at his feet a few minutes and said, 'Mr. Taylor.' He never moved. I stepped a little further in the door, and seen his face, and turned and ran out and hollered."

At this point Peavey again broke into sobs. He could not go on for some time. His mourning sounded so much like a guffaw that many smiled; some people in the room laughed. He became more hysterical and doubled forward in the chair, his shrieks causing a real sensation. A number of women spectators appeared frightened by the actions of the witness. He cried, cried brokenly, covering his face with his big hands. Finally Peavey composed himself, drying his eyes with a colorful silk handkerchief.

Nance: "Who did you summon? Who did you call to?"

Peavey: "I don't know."

Nance: "You just made a lot of noise to attract all the attention you could?"

Peavey: "Yes sir."

Nance: "Several people came, did they?"

Peavey: "Yes sir; I think Mr. Desmond, and the gentleman who owns the court was the first."

Nance: "You mean Mr. Jessurun?"

Peavey: "Yes sir."

Nance: "Who else came?"

Peavey: "And Mr.--you see I don't know their names--I just seen them--the two gentlemen next door, Mr. MacLean and Mr.--I can't think of the other gentleman's name--right next door to us."

Nance: "You didn't come back there after you had gone away, when Miss Normand was there with Mr. Taylor?"

Peavey: "No sir."

Henry was crying again.

Nance: "When you went out, was anybody around the place?"

Peavey: "Only Miss Normand's Chauffeur; he had his lights all on inside the limousine, cleaning it. I hit him on the back and stopped and talked to him a few minutes."

Nance: "When you first opened the door, did you see any furniture overturned, or any sign of a disturbance in the house?"

Peavey: "Nothing more than a chair that was sitting next to the wall had been pushed out a little bit and his feet was under this chair. The rest of the furniture around the house and room was just as I left them when I went away that evening."

Nance: "And did you notice whether anything had been taken off of his body, or not; any jewelry?"

Peavey: "I didn't notice that; I didn't touch him at all."

Nance: "Do you know whether he wore any valuable jewelry?"

Peavey: "Yes sir, he had a wrist watch and another watch with a lot of little trinkets on; and a thing you stamp checks with to keep anybody from making the check any bigger, and a lead pencil."

Nance: "Did he have a diamond ring?"

Peavey: "Yes sir, he had a large diamond ring that he wore."

Nance: "Do you know whether he had it on that evening?"

Peavey: "Yes sir, he was dressed just as when I went that evening, as I found him the next morning."

Nance: "Was the ring on his finger the next morning?"

Peavey: "Yes sir. His other jewelry that I had put away the night

before was just as I had put it away up in the dresser drawer."

Nance: "You didn't find anything taken from the apartment?"

Peavey: "No sir, it was just as when I left it when I found it. The rug was a little bit kicked up. It looked like he had pushed it with his foot."

Nance: "There was no other disturbance there?"

Peavey: "No sir; even the living room table that I had moved aside--the rocking chair would hit the table, and I moved the table so the rocking chair would not hit the table--it was just as I left it."

A Juror: "Were any of the windows up at night?"

Peavey: "No sir, we had those little long pins that runs in the windows. The windows upstairs in his bedroom were up; the windows downstairs I always locked with this peg that slipped in the window."

Nance: "Were they still that way in the morning?"

Peavey: "They were still that way in the morning. The lights were burning just as I had left them that night; two lights, one in the living room and one in the dining room."

Nance: "That is all, you may be excused."

Detective Sergeant Thomas Ziegler was the final witness.

Nance: "Please state your name."

Ziegler: "T. H. Ziegler."

Nance: "Where do you live?"

Ziegler: "425 North Hill."

Nance: "What is your occupation?"

Ziegler: "Police Officer."

Nance: "Mr. Ziegler, were you called to the premises where the deceased was found dead?"

Ziegler: "I was."

Nance: "When did you arrive there?"

Ziegler: "A little before 8 o'clock the morning of February 2nd."

Nance: "Will you state what you found when you got there?"

Ziegler: "I found the deceased, Mr. Taylor, lying just inside of the door, on his back. His hands, one of them, apparently to the side of his body, and the other lying outstretched; and blood pouring from his mouth. He was lying with his head to the east, flat on his back, dead."

Nance: "Was his body rigid and cold?"

Ziegler: "It was."

Nance: "Indicating he had been dead

for some time?"

Ziegler: "Yes sir."

Nance: "Did you see any evidence of a disturbance in the house?"

Ziegler: "Not any."

Nance: "Who was there when you arrived there?"

Ziegler: "The owner of the building, Mr. MacLean, another Movie Actor, and Mr. Peavey."

Nance: "You mean the owner of the building, Mr. Jessurun?"

Ziegler: "Yes sir; and Mr. MacLean and another man I don't know."

Nance: "One of the adjacent tenants of the building?"

Ziegler: "Yes sir, living next door east of Mr. Taylor."

Nance: "Did you question any of those persons as to whether they had heard any gunshot the night previous?"

Ziegler: "I did."

Nance: "What did you learn?"

Ziegler: "I learned that from Mrs. MacLean, that along about fifteen, or perhaps ten minutes to eight, the night before, she heard a shot. She thought it was a gunshot. She went to her front door and opened the door, and saw a man standing in Mr. Taylor's door. She looked at him, and he stood and looked at her; and he walked down the steps, turned to the left, and going around the end of the building, which is to the east; and out into the street."

Nance: "Into what street?"

Ziegler: "Which is Maryland, I think."

Nance: "Did Mr. Jessurun tell you he heard a shot?"

Ziegler: "I think he did."

Nance: "Did he say he didn't try to investigate it?"

Ziegler: "He did not; he didn't know but what it was an automobile making a noise."

Nance: "Did Mr. MacLean endeavor to investigate it?"

Ziegler: "Not that I know of, and Mrs. MacLean's Maid also heard a shot."

Nance: "Did they say why they didn't attempt to investigate the cause of the shot?"

Ziegler: "They did not."

Nance: "Did you find any weapon about the room where the deceased was lying?"

Ziegler: "I found a weapon in the room above."

Nance: "Where was it?"

Ziegler: "In the front bedroom in the dresser drawer, lying on a sort of box."

Nance: "Did you investigate to see whether the clothing was powder burnt or not?"

Ziegler: "I did not; that was investigated, I understand, later."

Nance: "Did you ask any of the persons who were called by Henry Peavey, the Valet, whether there was any weapon there when they first came into the room?"

Ziegler: "Yes sir, we looked for everything of that kind."

Nance: "Have you formed any conclusion whether it was possible this shot could have been fired by the deceased himself?"

Ziegler: "Impossible."

Nance: "Have you any questions, gentlemen?"

A Juror: "Was the revolver found upstairs loaded?"

Ziegler: "It was; it had five shells in it; it had not been shot of late."

A Juror: "Was it the same caliber bullet as was found on the deceased?"

Ziegler: "This was a 32-Automatic Savage."

A Juror: "In the drawer upstairs?"

Ziegler: "Yes."

A Juror: "What was the number of the bullet that was found?"

Ziegler: "I understand it was a 38; I haven't seen it."

Nance: "That is all, you may be excused. That is all the evidence we will take in this case. All but the Jury will be excused."

The inquest had lasted about forty-five minutes. Edna Purviance, the MacLeans and others present at the finding of Taylor's body were not called.

Captain of Detectives David L. Adams reached the scene just as the last witness was excused. He rushed in, summoned Detective Sergeant Herman Cline, Edward King and other officers present. The police sped away from the scene in a powerful automobile.

As the jury deliberated, back doors were opened and gates held ajar. Mabel Normand's big limousine was backed into an alley, behind an ice truck. Mabel, surrounded by various and sundry publicity experts, managers, legal representatives and other friendly infantry, appeared in a small door at the back of the undertaking establishment. From there she and her supporters dashed madly toward a little gate, down three steps and into the alley, fleeing to avoid interviewers and photographers.

Click, click, click went camera shutters. Then there was a race down the alley, with Mabel and her manager in the lead.

Miss Normand managed to get inside the car. There she remained until the last of her guard piled in and the \$7000 automobile sped down the alley.⁴

Meanwhile, as the jury deliberated over the form of the verdict, the crowd outside melted slowly away. Finally the verdict was arrived at and announced.

Verdict: "William Desmond Taylor came to his death on the 1st day of February 1922, by gunshot wound of the chest inflicted by some person or persons unknown to this jury with intent to kill or murder."

The six jury members signed their names, put on their hats and departed. The coroner, his duty finished, also departed.

In an adjoining room William Desmond Taylor lay on a marble slab.

In the room where the inquest was held, only the white eddying billows of smoke from the photographer's flash-powder circled near the ceiling.

For supplementary photos, see:
Los Angeles Times, February 5, 1922. Includes a photo of Mabel Normand on the witness stand.

Los Angeles Express, February 4, 1922. Includes an external photo of the undertaking establishment where the inquest was held.

Rochester Times-Union, February 11, 1922. Photograph of the crowd outside the building on the morning of the inquest.⁵



MYTHBUSTER

Myth: "Taylor was shot twice, or shot in the neck, or shot in the middle of the back."

The inquest testimony clearly shows that Taylor was shot once in the left side. The initial newspaper reports of the shooting had a great deal of inaccurate information, some of which continues to be repeated.

Myth: "Faith MacLean testified at the inquest that the person she saw leaving Taylor's home 'might have been a woman dressed like a man.'"

Mrs. MacLean did not testify at the inquest.

Myth: "Charles Eyton and other Paramount executives arrived at the murder scene before the police did and removed material (letters, liquor, etc.) before the police arrived."

The inquest testimony clearly indicates Eyton arrived on the scene after policeman Thomas Ziegler. When Ziegler arrived on the scene, the only individuals present were Peavey and the residents of the court. If anything was taken by Eyton it was taken under the noses of the police.

Myth: "Charles Eyton was notified of Taylor's death by Mabel Normand or Henry Peavey."

As Eyton testified at the inquest, it was Harry Fellows who notified him. It can be assumed that Peavey notified Fellows.

Myth: "When Taylor's body was found, a chair was found overturned and lying across his legs."

This myth was also born in early press stories. But inquest testimony by Peavey only stated that "a chair that was sitting next to the wall had been pushed out a little bit and his feet was under this chair." Note that this chair is not the rocking chair that Taylor had been sitting on while working at his desk.

There is other confirmation of the "overturned" chair's true position. The very first published diagram of the crime scene is from the Los Angeles Record of February 2. The chair is astride one leg but is not overturned.

On February 10, District Attorney Woolwine returned to the crime scene with Jessurun, the landlord who was the first person to enter the room after Peavey saw the body and went yelling for help. Woolwine's chauffeur posed as the corpse in the exact position Jessurun says he found the body. A photo was taken and published in the Los Angeles Examiner of February 11. It, too, shows the chair standing astride the left leg, but the chair is more toward Taylor's body, his heels even with the back legs of the chair.⁶

(The diagram from the Los Angeles Record can be found on page 24.)



BOOKSHELF

Although the Taylor case is arguably the most fascinating murder case in U. S. history, no comprehensive examination of the case has yet been published. Until then, we must make do with the scattered published information available thus far.

The case has been briefly written about many times, but virtually all published recaps are flawed; some are riddled with errors.

Several books on the case are reportedly nearing publication. When they appear they will be reviewed and discussed here. It is fervently hoped that at least one of the forthcoming books will finally make public the long-hidden L. A. P. D. file on the case.

This introductory column will list some published items of interest; do not consider the recaps to be totally accurate. Future columns will examine some of these items in more detail. If anyone knows of other publications, past or present, with more than a superficial recap of the Taylor case please share the information with this department.

General Recaps

Mack Sennett and Cameron Shipp, King of Comedy (Doubleday, 1954), pp. 222 ff. Invaluable. A paperback edition was published by Pinnacle in 1975.

Betty Harper Fussell, Mabel (Ticknor & Fields, 1982). Invaluable.

Erle Stanley Gardner, "William Desmond Taylor," The Los Angeles Murders, ed. by Craig Rice (Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1947), pp. 85-119.

Colleen Moore, Silent Star (Doubleday, 1968), pp. 78-89.

Kenneth Anger, Hollywood Babylon (Straight Arrow, 1975), pp. 32-41.

Alan Hynd, "Murder in Hollywood," American Mercury (November 1949), pp. 594-601.

Morris Markey, "Who Killed William Desmond Taylor?" Esquire (November 1950), pp. 65 ff.

William H. A. Carr, Hollywood Tragedy (Fawcett Crest, 1976), pp. 49-72.

Charles Nuetzel, Whodunit? Hollywood Style (Book Co. of America, 1965), pp. 36-54.

John Austin, Hollywood's Unsolved Mysteries (Ace, 1970), pp. 38-51.

Special Information

Sidney Sutherland, "Mabel Normand--Comedienne and Madcap," Liberty, (September 27-October 4, 1930).

Contains Mabel Normand's most detailed account of her activities on the day Taylor was shot.

Adela Rogers St. Johns, The Honeycomb (Doubleday, 1969), pp. 106-110.

Kevin Brownlow, Hollywood: The Pioneers (Knopf, 1979), p. 112.

Charles Higham, Celebrity Circus, (Delacorte, 1979), pp. 109-117.

Rare interview with Mary Miles Minter. Walter Wagner, You Must Remember This (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1975), pp. 81-3.

Statement by Claire Windsor. Edward Knoblock, Round the Room (Chapman and Hall, 1939), pp. 306-308.

Some information on Edward Sands. Florabel Muir, Headline Happy (Holt, 1950), pp. 100-102. Some information on press misconduct.

Edward Doherty, Gall and Honey (Sheed & Ward, 1941), pp. 196-202. Press background.

Bruce Long, "The William Desmond Taylor Murder Case," Classic Film Collector, No. 57, Winter 1977, pp. 24-32. Reprints many celebrity statements on the case from the L. A. newspapers.

Fiction

Samuel A. Peeples, The Man Who Died Twice (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1976).

"The Mysterious Death of William Desmond Taylor," Sleazy Scandals of the Silver Screen (Cartoonists Co-op Press, 1974). Attempts to link Taylor's death to Crowley's Ordo-Templi-Orientis.

Taylor's Life and Career

Richard Willis, "William D. Taylor--Master Producer of Masterpieces," Movie Pictorial (December 1915), pp. 8-9. One of the biggest articles on Taylor prior to his death.

Truman B. Handy, "The Colorful and Romantic Story of William D. Taylor's Remarkable Life," Movie Weekly (March 18-April 15, 1922). Lengthy but unreliable biography.

Dorothy Donnell, "Captain Alvarez," Motion Picture Magazine (July 1914), pp. 63-70. Fictionalization of Taylor's most noted film as an actor. Includes 9 stills from the film.

Roy L. McCardell, The Diamond From The Sky (Dillingham, 1916). Novel version of the epic 15½ hour serial which established Taylor's reputation as a director. For 10 chapters of the serial, the hero is a drug addict. Includes 16 stills from the serial.



Flashback: WALLACE SMITHChicago American

February 6, 1922:

More and more the eyes of the detectives are turned to the haunts of the Hollywood drug peddlers, the smugglers of forbidden "dope" who cater to the deparvities of the wild movie set. More and more they feel certain that sooner or later the secret of the shooting must come, directly or indirectly, from the dens of these human birds of prey.

It was this theory that led to the apprehension of the three men rounded up last night as suspects. They were directed in their search for the trio by a mysterious, anonymous informant. One of the trio was an actor once employed by Taylor. He had given up the rather unprofitable business of the stage for bootlegging, and later gave this up for the infinitely more simple and profitable peddling of drugs.⁶

After Mrs. Douglas MacLean, wife of the picture star, had failed to identify either of the three as the man she asserts she saw leaving Taylor's home about the time of the murder and after they had supplied likely alibis, they were released.

Make no mistake about the open handed operations of the drug ring in the wilds of Hollywood. It sounds melodramatic and perhaps smacks of an attempt at sensationalism. Regardless of sound or smack, it is an ever present and ever growing menace, almost unbelievable in the boldness with which it is carried on.

One of the present theories of the police is that Taylor, alias William Deane-Tanner, the man of the double life and the friend of many women, was receiving "dope" for one of his feminine acquaintances. It was rather definitely reported that she was a star whose friends had sought to keep her favorite "dope," morphine, away from her and that she had found in Taylor a willing agent.⁷

One of her admirers, it was theorized, learning that Taylor had been secretly holding the young woman a slave to the drug--and perhaps to his fancies--confronted him with the fact and killed him.

The actual developments in the past few hours of the sensational case were:

The frantic search for letters written by Mabel Normand, with Taylor

an hour before he was slain, to the director--letters which have disappeared from the bureau drawer in which he secreted them.

The disappearance of a dainty, peach colored silk nightgown, frilled with lace, and said to bear the monogram of one of the leading stars of the profession. One report placed this in the possession of an investigator who was said to have a private use for it. Another said that it had been recovered by some agent of the star.⁸

The discovery of other letters from other stars--including the notes of Blanche Sweet and Gloria Swanson; friendly little notes--among the private papers of the slain director.

The fact that a rich ne'er-do-well of Los Angeles, a man of wealth and influence and an unsavory reputation, was being kept under surveillance by the detectives.

The suspicion that a man recently risen to fame in the screen world, inspired by mad jealousy, had killed the director. He, too, was to be asked to account for his whereabouts the night of the slaying.

In all their huntings and scurrying around the detectives did not for a moment lose sight of their theme that the killer may have been a blackmailer, who shot his victim when the payer of tribute finally turned and defied him. This, in consideration of Taylor's tangled past and his numerous affairs with women, still seemed the most likely theory.

One by one the police are seeking to eliminate the improbable theories. Yesterday, headed by Chief of Detectives David Adams, the detectives assigned to the case held a conference in the Alvarado St. home where Taylor had lived.

While they discussed the case from the beginning the finger print experts were busily recording every trace of finger tip left on furniture and woodwork and glassware about the house. The finger print trailing was done most secretly. Somewhere among the telltale prints, it was realized, might be the impress left by the assassin.

But they realized, too, that many women had left their impression in the Taylor home. They were women high in their profession, and the impression they left might not have been held alone by the print of their fingers.

And in Hollywood it takes less--of, infinitely less--than a finger print

to ruin a reputation.

The detectives were interested, too, in an additional statement made by Henry Peavey, Taylor's houseman. Peavey, who is known as an expert with the crochet needle, asked permission to leave Los Angeles. It was denied. At the same time the detectives took the opportunity of questioning him again. 10

Miss Normand, in her early statements, declared that she had never gone to Taylor's home alone before last Wednesday night--the night he was killed.

"I'm sure she was there Tuesday night," said Peavey, "because I'd cooked some rice pudding and she liked it. Mr. Taylor asked her if she wanted some more when she came Wednesday night, but she said no.

"Mr. Taylor seemed to be more in love with her than what she was with him. I know when she was in New York he sent her telegrams every night, and even when he was home he wrote letters to her three or four times a week. He was always sending her bouquets of flowers, too. I went out and bought one for him to send once and, man, it cost \$35.

"Miss Normand told me once that she was going to marry Mr. Taylor and she said where maybe some day they would have a little baby and maybe I could take care of it."

He was asked what sort of a drink he had made for Taylor and Miss Normand during her visit. Peavey's past tense for "squeeze" is "squiz."

"It wasn't much of a drink," he said. "I squiz a little orange and then I squiz a little lemon. Then I poured in a jigger or two of gin and a dash of Italian Vermouth. It was a pretty good little drink. They liked it plenty."

Miss Normand attempted to make light of the search for her letters, although it became known that she made a trip in person, escorted by her manager, to the Taylor home and went to the drawer in which he usually kept such letters. At the same time she was asked by detectives to re-enact the scene of her conference with Taylor.

"The letters were just little personal things," declared Miss Normand, "and I do not think they could possibly be of interest to the public. I am sure they will throw no light whatever on this tragic case. I just wanted to have them back, that's all."

She would not comment on the fact that she was supposed to have presented

Taylor with a \$1,800 cigaret holder and that he was reported to have given her an expensive toilet set.

"Is there to be no privacy in this world again," she exclaimed.

Mary Miles Minter again was questioned by the police. She stated that she had not seen Taylor to speak to for some weeks before he was shot. She explained the fact that she had rushed to his home at the first report of his death as the act of a friend.

The search for the peach-hued "nighties" promised to become interesting. With blackmail already in the air, the owner of the garment might feel a bit apprehensive about having it fall into the hands of one who might find in it a weapon for levying tribute.

That it had disappeared was revealed after Peavey, the house man, had spoken of putting it carefully away a few nights before his employer was slain.

That it had been in Taylor's possession, at all, gave new color to the stories of the affairs with women conducted by the man who was known to his friends as "a man's man," and one who "always played a lone hand."

These same friends, surprised as they were by the news that Taylor had been married, was a father and a wife-deserter, have with stubborn regard for the ethics of friendship, refused to discuss the private affairs of the man who is dead.

Which may be fine for the ethics of friendship, but which is making it rather difficult for the police, who are seeking the friend's slayer.

It is also giving rise to rumors about the abuse of strength being manifested by the moving picture interests in "hushing up" all tales which might in some way reflect on the actors and actresses--even those whose dissipations are notorious and matters of every-day gossip.

It has even been hinted that if there is any money to be raised it will not be for the purpose of finding the man who killed Taylor, but for the purpose of "hushing up" those who might assist in capturing the assassin.

Meanwhile, the mad "parties" in Hollywood continue. Some of the wilder ones may be a little quiet for a week or so, but only rarely, they learned, is there any telling investigation. And soon they will be at it again.

Chicago American
February 7, 1922

Detectives rushed into the haunts of the "dope" peddlers of Hollywood this afternoon with orders to take into custody a man known as "Dirty" Diamond, reported chief of the "drug ring" that has made hundreds of thousands of dollars and scores of victims of narcotics in the wilder young motion picture set.

Led by the same mysterious woman informant whose tales took them to the "dope" dens, the police declared that Diamond could direct them to the slayer of William Desmond Taylor and tell the story behind the weird mystery of Alvarado St.

Their search began when a long-distance telephone call from Carlin, Nev., informed them that a suspect there, believed to have been Edward F. Sands, alias Edwin Fitz-Strathmore, Taylor's former valet and secretary, had been captured and had proved to be another man.

Another development today was the making public of a love letter, partially in a code that was easily decipherable, said to have been discovered among Taylor's books. It read:

"I love you--Oh, I love you so-- I had to come down because Mamma remarked that I always seemed to feel rather happy after being out with you. So here I am. Camouflage. Furthermore, I am feeling unusually fine. (More camouflage.) I will see you later. God love you, as I do."ll

The Carlin suspect, who was accompanied by another man, had brought suspicion on himself by his mysterious actions which concluded when he locked himself in a house on the outskirts of the little mining town. He was surrounded there by sheriff's men and surrendered.

The search for the man known as Diamond was given added importance by the police because of the feeling from the first that sooner or later the true story of the slaying must come from inside the dope ring.

Meanwhile investigators seem to have cleared up at least one angle of the slaying mystery--that was the sudden disappearance from his hotel of a wealthy young New Yorker the day after the murder. This was a man once reported engaged to Mary Miles Minter.¹² It was theorized at the time that he had slain Taylor because of his jealousy over her friendship with the director.

Today, however, it was learned that an affair of another sort caused his disappearance--at the request of the hotel management. On the night of the murder, according to this information, it was said the New Yorker, with an actor of the movies, were entertaining rather informally two women in the New Yorker's room. Contraband liquor played no small part in the entertainment.

The hotel detective, summoned by other patrons of the hotel, asked that the women leave. He was assaulted by the two men.

The name of Mary Miles Minter persists in the strange tangle of affairs despite her assertion that her affection for Taylor was only that "a very young girl might feel for a much older man."

Investigators searching for letters in the Taylor home discovered a single sheet of paper bearing a butterfly monogram crest, said to be affected by Miss Minter. Written firmly across it was: "I love you--I love you--I love you."

There were nine symbolic small crosses of the sort sentimentally understood to represent long-distance kisses. They were followed by a giant cross, the size of which was further emphasized by a whopping big exclamation point. The letter was signed: "Mary."

At the Minter home, the actress' maid declared her mistress was asleep and couldn't be disturbed for hours. It was reported that news of the epistolary discovery had been carried to Miss Minter and that she had failed to deny authorship of the note.

While waiting an opportunity to interview Miss Minter detectives followed the trail of still another woman--the cool slim figure of one of filmdom's leading actresses that stepped out of the drug-frenzied setting of Hollywood's feverish "dope" parties with a new version of the strange killing.

She slipped from the sordid background as she had left a score of times the scenes of mad revelry--to make her way under the cloak of night to the home of the man who was killed. He was her lover.

One of the most noted of the screen's favorites--and one of the pitiful number who have become thralls of the dope ring--the police say, led by new spectacular developments, believe that the film beauty may be the assassin.

Her motive, the police informants declare, was a strange infatuation for the quiet, well-mannered director turned to burning rage by her jealousy of other women known to have visited the Alvarado St. home--once considered the quarters of a recluse bachelor and now known as the abode of secret love.

Detectives directed their search toward the actress following the stories of neighbors of the Taylor home, who told of her visits in the early hours of the morning.

These tales were verified in the half-whispers that sounded in the haunts of the drug peddlers, among whom the secrets of the stars that shine on the celluloid firmament are matters of everyday gossip. They know it as part of their infamous trade.

So impressed were the authorities with the sight of the latest will-o'-the-wisp across the swamp of scandal and gossip revealed with Taylor's killing that they were ready to construct their entire theory of the crime, including the time it was done.

Generally it had been accepted that Taylor was shot half an hour after Mabel Normand had ended her visit with the director, a visit enlivened by a discussion of classic literature and gin cocktails. The time was placed at about 8:30 p. m., Wednesday.

Now, it is believed that Taylor may have been shot down by the beauty of the screen at an hour after midnight.

The associations of Taylor and the woman were mildly known to Hollywood filmdom. That is, what might be called their daylight acquaintance. Hollywood did not even raise its jaded eyebrows. There had been too many women in Taylor's life.

They did not know of her early morning visits to Alvarado St. They might have wondered why she, looked upon as a queen of the delirious revels where ether and cocaine were blended with morphine and opium, left these "parties" at an hour considered early in Hollywood. But they were used to strange behaviors.

There was a bit of gossip when it was learned that the young woman, in a burst of drug-inspired confidence, had boasted that she intended to marry "Billy" Taylor.

"He's mine," she said, "and he knows it."

Hollywood smiled tolerantly.

"There must be something about Bill Taylor," it said.

On New Year's Eve and far into New

Day, the advent of the fresh year was hailed by Hollywood with a wild and drunken shout. Old timers hereabouts say that the celebration in its wildness surpassed anything ever seen in these parts. Out of it since have grown twenty scandals and domestic shipwrecks.

Taylor and the woman who boasted that she would marry him quarreled violently at the "party" they attended. So violently that they separated on the spot.

Half crazed with the drug she had taken the woman ran in a rage to her car and drove it to her home. In the morning, according to the dope peddlers--remember that was part of their trade--she repented and telephoned Taylor.

Taylor, when the woman left, seemed turned to a man of stone. At last he shook himself together, formally bade farewell to others of the party and stalked to his car. When he reached home, according to the stories the police heard from the dens of the dope peddlers, he broke down and wept. When daylight came, he was off on one of his solitary walks into the foothills.

He returned just before the woman telephoned. He refused to go to the phone when he learned who it was.

Later, it was stated, she made several efforts to reconciliation. She phoned. She sent friends to intervene. She wrote impassioned letters--letters for which the police are searching.

But Taylor was through with her. There had been other women in his life. There still were. He was seen in their company in public. With them he went to "parties" in private studios; friends of the jilted actress sought to confront her with gossip about Taylor's carrying-on with other women.

Then came the night of Taylor's death--the night that Mabel Normand, once reported engaged to him, visited Alvarado Street.

That night, as they say in the movie subtitles, the film queen again was at a dope "party," morose and embittered, according to the police information. To her side came one of her consoling friends.

"What a fine dumb-bell you are to be crying about that fellow," she said. "Why, he's got a woman at his house right now."

"That's a lie," cried the star.

"All right," said the other.

"But if I wanted to, I could tell you

her name."

For more than an hour, according to the information given the police, the young woman who had boasted she would marry "Bill" Taylor brooded. Then without a word to any one, she left.

The police believe it possible that this woman, with the fumes of the drug fanning the flame of fierce jealousy that burned within her, armed herself and went to the home of Taylor ready to demand his love and ready to kill him if he refused.¹³

And it was upon this theory that they were at work today. They found their inquiry blocked among the moving picture people who knew Taylor best and who knew, too, of his affair with the woman of the screen under suspicion.

Very close-mouthed, these garrulous ones of the films have become. They still talk about "Bill" Taylor as the "man's man" and the one who "played a lone hand."

"Most of them are afraid to talk," declared one of the Los Angeles detectives who has had wide experience in the affairs of the Hollywood studios. "They know that if once one of them starts talking all of them are likely to talk and all of them will be mixed up either in this affair or others that are worse."

In their search for the slayer the detectives did not drop the theory that Taylor had been slain by a blackmailer. At each new phase of his past--the dual life that he hid so painstakingly behind his air of reserve--there are seen possibilities for the blackmail plotter.

Was the suspected blackmailer a man who knew the truth behind the stories that Taylor was so fond of telling? Did he hold in his murderous grip the secret of secrets that Taylor wished to keep--the secret that made him the slave of extortionists?

The detectives are convinced that on the day he was killed Taylor drew over \$2,300 from the bank to pay to his tormentors. They are certain that Taylor was about to write a check and suddenly refused just before he was shot.

The search for Edward Sands, alias Edward Fitz Strathmore, former valet and secretary to Taylor, was continued. At least, it was ordered continued. It was no secret among the detectives engaged in the case that they were strongly divided on the importance of taking the former valet into custody.

An apparent timidity existed among

the officials, also, about confronting a certain Los Angeles man of wealth, with an unsavory reputation even where the "parties" became wildest, with a demand for an accounting of his whereabouts on the night Taylor was slain. This man, it was stated, was known to be in love with one of the women interested in Taylor and his car was said to have been seen that night in the vicinity of the Taylor home.

The disappearance of the letters of Mabel Normand to Taylor still was causing something of a flurry, although one report insisted that they had been located and were in the hands of investigators. These letters, Miss Normand admitted, were signed "Your baby" and made references to "your blessed baby." She feared, she said, that the public might misconstrue the meaning of harmless little pet words exchanged between herself and the director.

Detectives during the day questioned a prominent film manager, who, according to reports, had visited Taylor a few weeks ago and, in some heat, had demanded the surrender of the letters. The film manager denied that he had ever made such a demand, or, indeed, that he knew anything of the letters.

Incidentally, Miss Normand is making arrangements to have her telephone number changed and kept a secret. All sorts of impossible people have been phoning her and annoying her, she declared, since her name was mentioned in connection with the Taylor tragedy.

The mystery of the silken nightgown, the delicate, filmy thing of peach color that Taylor was supposed to have kept scented and folded in his dresser drawer, remained a mystery.

The dainty garment apparently had disappeared, although at one time it was reported in the hands of the police. Henry Peavey, the Taylor houseman, is said to have declared that the gown bore an embroidered monogram. He also is reported to have disclosed the initials worked into the monogram. Another rumor stated that the garment had been identified through a laundry mark.

But the nightgown itself has mysteriously disappeared.



Flashback: CELEBRITIESOregonian

February 12, 1922:

HOLLYWOOD ORGIES ARE BRANDED MYTH

Hollywood is a quiet, law-abiding suburban community, inhabited by respectable citizens. Movie-land, so far as the morals of the film celebrities are concerned, is not the wild oasis of dissipation pictured on the screen of public opinion these days.

This was the emphatic assertion of Edward ("Hoot") Gibson, world's champion cowboy, screen star and daredevil and a true Oregonian by preference, on his arrival in Portland Saturday morning for a series of personal appearances at the Liberty Theater.

"The reports and gossip of orgies and high life among the moving picture stars are exaggerated a hundred-fold, or are simply false stories based on unauthentic rumor," said Gibson.

"I have lived in the center of Hollywood for four years and the big stars in the pictures are friends I have known intimately. I can truthfully say that I know of only one star who was a drug addict. The star was a girl who was forced out of the film game because of her use of drugs.

"The tales of elaborate 'dope' parties in the studios and homes of the stars are not true, so far as I know. Drugs are peddled in the studios, of course, just as they are in any town or city, including Portland. Dope peddlers gain access to the studios by securing jobs as 'extras,' workers or hangers-on.

"A man or woman who becomes a prominent figure in the motion picture world cannot make good against the handicaps of drugs, liquor or other forms of excess.

"To prove my belief in the moral goodness of screen players, I would be willing to take anyone into the home of any of the stars I know and let the visitor see the life of the stars of the screen. My personal record is clean and I have nothing to fear from any just investigation. I can say the same for other picture people.

"Some of the male stars take a drink once in a while, but not enough to hurt them. Often a star gets a bad reputation unjustly through the boasting gossip of some outsider who partakes of the star's hospitality, and then tells how he 'got soused to the gills in a big party with So-and-So, the famous film hero.'

"Nine-tenths of the persons who appear in news stories of a sensational nature are men and women never heard of in the profession. They are 'extras' with a few days or months experience, or no connection at all with pictures. When caught in a jam, they call themselves movie actors or actresses.

"Nearly all the stars are married and live quietly with their families. The lives of such stars as Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, Charles Chaplin, Lila Lee and dozens of others I can name are absolutely clean."

Gibson declared that the Taylor murder and subsequent publicity will eventually cost the film industry millions of dollars. He charged the police of Los Angeles with "four-flushing" and "Keystone cop antics."

"The real murderer has fooled them and to make a showing they are dragging in the names of famous stars to divert public attention," he said.

"Mabel Normand and Mary Miles Minter are absolutely innocent of any wrongdoing in connection with Taylor's murder.

"My personal theory is that Sands, the butler, is at the bottom of the tragedy, although the man who planned it might not have done the killing."

Referring to the trial of Roscoe ("Fatty") Arbuckle, Mr. Gibson expressed the firm belief that the plump comedian was innocent.

"It isn't like Roscoe to do anything like that," he said. "Everybody in the picture profession knew of the fits that occasionally seized Miss Rappe."

Flashback: BON MOTSMemphis News Scimitar

February 22, 1922:

A whole lot depends on location. For instance X in algebra is said to represent the unknown quantity; on a greenback it has the voice of 10 silver bucks, or a hundred dimes. On a Hollywood perfumed note it puts you under suspicion--no matter what your chauffeur says.

Life

March 3, 1922:

The moving picture colony in California seems determined to turn itself inside out.

Flashback: COMMENTARYLouisville Times

February 7, 1922:

FIRE BURN AND CAULDRON BUBBLE

The movie owner and the movie director have been the men of amours since the flying camera shutter first began to click. Handsome though he be, the leading man has had hard sledding. Now and then a beautiful lady would fall to his portion; and, of course, he had his share of bathing beauties and roadhouse party-fodder; but the Guineveres, the Elaines, the Cleopatras and the Columbines have worn the tag of owner and director.

These form the higher circle of the fast life on the Camera Coast, and thus the new tragedy in Hollywood is interesting to the public because it deals almost wholly with stars. Poor Fatty Arbuckle was the only luminary in his case because he is an actor and has only limited favors to bestow. But Taylor was a director in the first degree: desirable parts and large salaries went to whom he said they should go.

He had a bijou flat in a bijou row, and it was appointed as a garconniere¹⁴ should be. After the megaphonics of the day the Great Director would retire to this little nest and to him would repair some lady artist to have a quiet nip and to discuss the burning subject of art. The more the Great Director appreciated the qualities of these artists, the greater their opportunities and the larger their salaries. The persistence on the screen of many vulgar and awkward women in star roles proves how much a director can do to make life profitable and pleasing, and his favor is even more important than an owner's. So if he has a little flat and is hospitable to ladies, what more delightful than to visit him as his butler is leaving and clink a refreshing cocktail? Nearly all the lady artists have a "mother" or an "aunt" abiding with them who are so confident of the virtue of their charges that they are lenient with them; and these duennas can arise in time of stress to vow that Maisie was only a casual friend and is a good girl who never had a temperature of over 98½ in all her life.

Taylor, being unusually well-placed to extend favors to lady artists, and being a dashing fellow withal was popular with the fair and received a number of visitors, for whom an

inventory of his effects reveals that he furnished every modern convenience. In many other bijou flats on other bijou rows other directors have been in equal favor, and all in Hollywood was as merry, if not as regular, as a marriage bell.

But the smiles of women bring the frowns of men, and a man who roves with too many sometimes gets in trouble with one. So one night last week the director accompanied his last fair visitor to the limousine. Then came murder and mystery into Hollywood and into the lurid columns devoted to the tragedy came names that were not commercially benefited by it. And the mystery endures, and the blood cries out for vengeance, and before the two are quieted there will be a deal of uneasiness, and shattered feet of clay will be strewn about the fallen images of several golden girls.

It is inevitable. The ingredients of scandal and immorality and tragedy are generously found in movie colonies. Never before in the history of the world have so many women, depending mainly on their beauty, been vying for place and favor from men. Place and favor in the movies have all too frequently gone for a fundamental price eagerly given, cynically received.

Albany Journal

February 9, 1922:

A SUGGESTION THAT IS IN ORDER

During several days, the wires have been loaded with information about thus far futile activities of detectives who are "working on" the Taylor murder case at Hollywood. Names of film actresses and other personages of the movie world have been dragged in. Silly letters said to have been written by one of them have been quoted. Alleged clues have been exhibited. Long stories have been written about possibilities. Almost, one is inclined to suspect that the "news" has been produced by professional scenario writers whose specialty has been to manufacture stories for serial reels of the blood-and-thunder variety.

Manifestly the suggestion is in order that the output of words be checked, and not be permitted to flow again unless and until the murderer is caught.



Flashback: TAYLOR'S WORDSNew York Telegraph

June 22, 1919:

Taylor Glad of War Experience

William D. Taylor, who recently returned from France and is now producing "Huckleberry Finn," was asked whether the lapse of time had affected his directing. He replied that it had made him more determined and earnest than ever.

"There is a change in every man who was in France," he added, "and I believe the change is all for the better. Shams and trivialities will not annoy any of us again; there is a lack of patience with smallness."

San Francisco Chronicle

June 27, 1920:

William D. Taylor, who directed several successful pictures for Mary Miles Minter and whose latest production, "Huckleberry Finn," won unstilted praise from all parts of the country, dropped in on San Francisco last week with a company of Famous Players-Lasky stars. He is working on a new film that he says should be a hit.

Taylor sees great significance in the statement made by a New York theatrical reviewer that John Barrymore has shown in his stage work beneficial effects from his screen experience. Barrymore is playing in Shakespeare's tragedy, "Richard III," in the East with sensational success.

The critic referred to declared that the actor shows a sureness, ease in method and a repose that never characterized his work until recently.

"These virtues," said Taylor, "are sure to come from experience before the camera. I know not only from observation, but as a former actor of the stage, who realizes the handicaps under which the player of the footlights labors. The fine thing about the screen, from the actor's standpoint, is the privilege it gives him of scrutinizing his own work. The things he is prone to overdo, the little mannerisms that so greatly detract from his work, and the nervous impulses that are apt to shade his acting are all spread out in merciless array before his eye. It will take a lot of conceit out of any star of the stage who has never been before the camera to undergo this experience. The best of them have their faults and overwork their little tricks.

"A second benefit of camera experience comes from the privilege of seeing how and where to stress one's points. No one can look at a film revealing his work without being struck with the fact that he ought to have done certain things differently to register the greatest success.

"All this benefit is denied to the stage player, who cannot see himself as others see him, as he may do when he stands aloof and looks over his shadow on the curtain. The best the actor of the spoken drama can do is to judge his work by the effect on the audience. He cannot appraise himself and learn how he could do even better.

"The technique of the stage and the screen are different, yet they have much in common in the fundamentals of acting. The new things that have been discovered as a result of the photoplay's advent have done much for the art of the stage. All of the players that I have talked with agree on that. So instead of being an injury to the older art, as its partisans used to fear, the motion picture has been a positive benefit as this discerning critic of Barrymore's histrionic progress has observed."

Photoplay Magazine

February 1922:

Various screen executives were asked whether New York or Los Angeles is preferred as a center of motion picture production. This is Taylor's response.

"I am mighty fond of New York and could not get along without going there at least once a year, for its artistic, dramatic and literary advantages, but as a place to make pictures it certainly cannot compare with Los Angeles. Honest and disinterested thought can produce no other conclusion. It takes twice as long to make a picture in New York and therefore costs much more. And even in an artistic product like pictures, the cost is one of the most essential things to reckon with."

Flashback: BON MOTSWhittier News

February 23, 1922:

Movie hint: A shooting star falls.

Flashback: HUMORNew York Mail

February 8, 1922:

TWINKLE, LITTLE MOVIE STAR,
HOW I WONDER WHERE YOU ARE!

The motto of the fillum colony seems to be "Fillum up again." But that doesn't lead us any closer to the solution of the crime. We are now getting our own news from Hollywood and in the rush of getting out an afternoon paper we are obliged to present it in a sort of disjointed way, mingling the strictly editorial utterances with the news items. That such a thing could happen in the motion picture colony is shocking and unexpected. To begin with, according to my reports from the scene, everybody is agreed that the victim was not fond of any woman, didn't associate with them and was practically a hermit. Never a breath, you understand--

FLASH: Quantities of silk lingerie and negligee found in bureau drawers of bungalow. Silk nighties neatly folded, some with hairpins in them.

TO EDITORS--ADD FLASH--Taylor did not wear silk nighties or hairpins. The plot thickens.

Miss Mazie Tabasco, prominent and beautiful screen star, told the police today that she never knew Taylor, never saw him and that he did not tell her he was going to beat up his valet. Miss Tabasco last appeared in 1909 in "The Tribulations of Tillie." She maintained under close questioning that she never heard of Taylor. Nobody in the film colony ever heard of her. So it looks like a draw.

Bill Taylor was a man's man. Everybody in the movie colony knew that. He associated with men who did embroidery and knitting and point lace. All the love letters in the bungalow were tied with blue baby ribbon.

ADD MAZIE TABASCO: Miss Tabasco wore a charming mink coat and rolled stockings when questioned by the police. She was almost overcome by emotion but was not too weak to be photographed.

Miss Juniper Berry, a beautiful screen star, was bewitchingly dressed as she alighted from her motor in front of police headquarters this morning, where she went to volunteer what information she didn't have concerning the crime. She wore a saucy turban with red cherries, a mauve sport coat. She didn't know a thing about the crime, but the photographers got some excellent pictures. Miss Berry is one of the

most prominent unknown screen actresses in the country. She is looking for a job.

FLASH: The gun was a .38-caliber. Important.

ADD FLASH: Jealousy was the cause. A well-known actor was in love with a beautiful actress who had an ice cream soda with Taylor three years ago, and he swore vengeance. He will be arrested before night, but we don't know what night.

FLASH: It has been definitely proven that jealousy was not the cause. The actress mentioned is Miss Hyacinth De Vere. She never met Taylor, and she says it was not an ice cream soda she had with him that day anyhow, but a nut sundae.

IMPORTANT: Miss June Bugg, the beautiful film favorite, has hastened here to deny a statement that has never been made to the effect that she was in the bungalow at the time of the murder. She was in Kansas City that night. She indignantly denies that she was engaged to Taylor. Nobody ever said she was, and the incident has been dropped.

"I loved him with all my heart and soul," sobbed Miss Lutie Bibbins, the beautiful film star, after she had fought her way into police headquarters to give her version of the affair. "I loved him, but there was nothing sentimental about it. We were just good pals." Miss Bibbins wore attractive furs and a Paris suit, also galoshes with buttons not buttoned. She carried a walking stick with gold head incrustated with diamonds.

FLASH: Miss Iodine Frothingham, the well-known and beautiful screen star, informed the police today that Miss Bibbins had never seen Taylor in her life. "I am the one who gave him the \$1,800 ebony cigarette holder," said Miss Frothingham. "He was my best friend and I am all busted up. If you have got to get my picture don't get a profile. I am simply overwhelmed."

Others who denied to the police today that they were engaged to Taylor were Misses Ivy Stump, Hazel Wood, Rose Bush, Celludlid St. Claire, Amethyst Binks, Geraldine Gimme, Minnie Maggie Mudge, Tapioca Todd and Lucille Luscious.

One hundred and thirty-seven beautiful film stars denied themselves to callers today. The plot thickens.

Miss Anastasia Hash, prominent and beautiful film star, volunteered some important evidence to the police today.

Miss Hash's story was as follows, taken from stenographic notes:

"I passed right by the bungalow three evenings before the crime and I didn't see a thing. I got this sable coat in Paris. I never met Mr. Taylor. My next picture will be produced by the Punkart people. I have never been in love."

Miss Oleomargarine Pipp, the beautiful film star, told the police today; "I had lunch with Mr. Taylor in 1919 in Los Angeles. I didn't notice anything wrong with him then. I have not seen him since."

FLASH--IMPORTANT: The bungalow was built of wood.

FLASH: New and important witness sought. He is a man high up in the screen profession--very high indeed. He does airplane stunts. Evidence is very strong against him as the possible murderer, as he was in New York at the time of the shooting.

Miss Gardenia Geranium Julap, the well-known and beautiful screen star, is hastening to Hollywood from Alaska to be interviewed. She was there on location at the time of the crime and never heard of Taylor before. She is on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

The police believe they have rounded up nearly everybody who doesn't know anything about the crime and who never knew Taylor.

Was it jealousy? Was it business rivalry? Did some woman hire an assassin to fire the bullet? Was it a holdup?

One feature of the thing has baffled the police from the start. There doesn't seem to be any woman mixed up in it.

And then again, it has come to a pretty pass when the movie colony cannot pull off a murder or two without the police getting all steamed up over it. Please pass the smelling salts.

--Roy K. Moulton

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Flashback: BON MOTS

Nashville Tennessean
February 6, 1922:

The shooting of a movie director has caused considerable disturbance in Los Angeles. Must have shot the wrong one.

Tampa Tribune
February 18, 1922:

None of the stars whose names have been connected with the Taylor mystery has complained as yet about somebody else having been given a more prominent part.

Des Moines Tribune
March 13, 1922:

The charge that movie actors are drug fiends may explain some of the awful acting we have been compelled to witness.

New Orleans States
February 11, 1922:

The coroner who is investigating the death of Taylor the movie magnate is named Nance. For the love of Mike it seems that femininity is mixed up with the case in one way or another from beginning to end.

Boston Globe
February 27, 1922:

Every time the detectives tell us that they are regarding the Hollywood murder mystery from a new angle, they remind us that they are going around in circles.

Louisville Times
February 14, 1922:

If William Desmond Taylor had married all the women to whom he is reported to have been engaged, he would not have been murdered. He would have been safe in the penitentiary.

Seattle Star
February 14, 1922:

Every time there is a shooting scrape in the movie colony some screen star finds out where the rest of her clothes are.

Detroit Free Press
March 16, 1922:

At the movies: "I always thought her such a sweet girl, but I can see now she looks kinda depraved."

Indianapolis News
February 9, 1922:

The persistent claim of Los Angeles that it is different from the rest of the world is now conceded.



Flashback: CARTOON

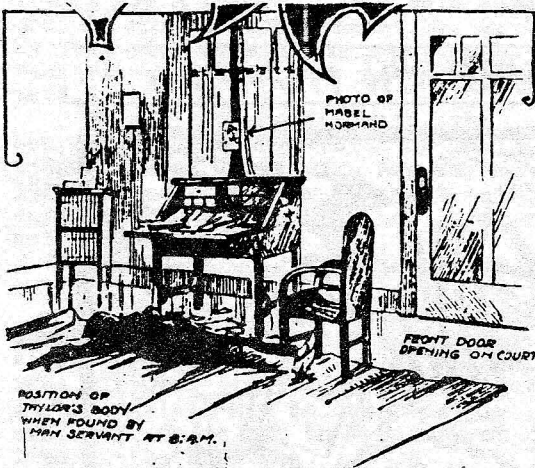
Pittsburg Sun
February 11, 1922:

A CUBISTAYLOR PICTURE—By Hungerford



NOTES

Los Angeles Record
February 2, 1922:



1. See the Rochester Times-Union (February 11, 1922).
2. Comedian Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle was accused of causing the death of Virginia Rappe following a party in San Francisco. He was eventually acquitted but his career was finished and there was public speculation when the Taylor case broke that some more careers might be finished. For details on the Arbuckle case see David Yallop, The Day the Laughter Stopped (St. Martin's Press, 1976).
3. The narrative material on the inquest was gathered from the Los Angeles Express, Los Angeles Times, Los Angeles Examiner, San Francisco Chronicle, Long Beach Press, Chicago American, Cleveland Plain Dealer, St. Louis Globe-Democrat, New York News and New York Tribune.
4. Mabel Normand's automobile, as well as the automobile filled with police officers, went from the inquest directly to the murder scene. There, she showed the officers exactly how the furniture had been arranged when she left Taylor. She also sought the letters she had written to him, which were now discovered to be missing.
5. The position of Taylor's right arm is another matter. Ziegler testified that one arm was at Taylor's side, the other arm outstretched, and the diagram above would confirm that. But the people who were present immediately after the body was found told the investigators that both arms were at

Taylor's side and it is there both arms are found in the posed reconstruction photo.

6. Actor George Milo was one of the men "rounded up."

7. The theory that Taylor was supplying narcotics to Mabel Normand was abandoned once the extent of Taylor's anti-drug activity was revealed.

8. The nightgown was rumored to bear the initials "M M M", though the only newspaper to actually come out and say so at this time was the Des Moines Tribune (February 10, 1922). Some Hollywood apologists have since written that no nightgown ever existed, but its existence is beyond question. What is in doubt, however, is whether or not there were initials on it, and whether or not it was the property of Mary Miles Minter.

9. Gloria Swanson later stated that the only thing she ever sent Taylor was a Christmas card. It was that card which had been discovered and inflated into a mythical correspondence by the press. See Movie Weekly (May 6, 1922).

10. In a 1930 interview Peavey stated that he had wanted to leave town after the murder because he knew the D. A.'s office would make trouble for him.

Not because he was guilty, but because he "knew" Mabel Normand was guilty.

11. This letter was written by Mary Miles Minter, as was the longer code letter subsequently published.

12. This individual is clearly Thomas E. Dixon, Jr., heir to the Dixon pencil fortune.

13. These rumors are directed at Mabel Normand. Any doubts about that are erased the following day, when papers carried an interview with Taylor's chauffeur. He stated that Mabel and Taylor were out together on New Year's Eve, quarreled, and Taylor cried afterward.

14. "garcionniere" = bachelor's quarters.



This issue is dedicated to
Betty Harper Fussell

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